

Next on

Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection

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Encore presentations of the entire *Discoveries* series every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. on WRTI-HD2

Saturday, March 1st, 2014, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Ignaz Brüll

Ignaz Brüll (1846–1907). [Serenade No. 2](#), Op. 36 (1878). Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Marius Stravinsky. Cameo Classics 9031, Tr 1-3. 18:39

Brüll. [Violin Concerto](#), Op. 45 (1882). Ilya Hoffman, violin, Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Michael Laus. Cameo Classics 9048, Tr 2-4. 30:32



It would be disconcerting enough to be at a party with Johannes Brahms. The famous composer was famously grumpy; some of classical music's great one-liners come from him. When told after the premiere of his first symphony that it sounded like Beethoven, he snapped, "Any ass can see that." He told a young composer, showing him a new work inspired, he said, by Beethoven, "It's a good thing Beethoven was not inspired by you." And then there's Brahms leaving a gathering: "If there is anyone here whom I have not insulted, I beg his pardon."

But imagine not only being at a party with Brahms, but being the host, being a composer yourself, and sitting next to him, playing a new Brahms work at the piano. If you can picture that, then you can picture being Ignaz Brüll. (*In the photograph: Brahms seated, right; Brüll, standing, left.*)

Brüll lived in Vienna, the musical capital of Europe, almost his entire life. Although his father was a successful businessman, both he and Brüll's mother were musicians, and encouraged their son's musical gifts. He became a wonderful pianist, concertized, composed, married, and threw parties at his house, which became a meeting-place for his good friend Brahms, Gustav Mahler, Carl Goldmark, the critic Eduard Hanslick, and many other powerful musicians and music-lovers. Whenever Brahms (a good but not great pianist) wanted to air out—piano four-hands—a new piece, he called on Ignaz Brüll to sit next to him.

His biggest success was an opera, *The Golden Cross*, and he wrote a number of well-received works (Anton Rubinstein was a fan), including much piano music, three *Serenades*, and a Violin Concerto written for Johann Lauterbach (who has a "Lauterbach" Stradivarius named after him). The second *Serenade* was recorded using the score and parts in the Fleisher Collection. Fleisher also provided materials for the Violin Concerto project, but the story's a bit more complicated.

Michael Laus, the conductor on this recording, found the full score in the Fleisher Collection. No parts existed. He also had access to the composer's manuscript, and the violin/piano version (a piano-with-solo edition of a concerto is often published so that the soloist may study or even perform the work without an orchestra). The challenge for Laus, though, was that the three sources sometimes disagreed. So he compared them, corrected obvious mistakes, and used the full and piano scores to illuminate confusing smudges in the manuscript. To make it even more interesting, Brüll had rewritten some of the solo for the piano version publication, so that was different. When all this was wrangled, Laus made a set of parts, and went to the recording studio.

Why has the music languished up to now? Partly it's because that, even though Brahms himself called Brüll "an exceptional melodist," and though *The Golden Cross* enjoyed multiple performances into the 1920s, his other works never struck fire. And partly it's because he suffered the fate of other Jewish composers under the Nazis. He died in 1907 but his music was banned in the 1930s. His fortunes, however, are changing now. These works and others are being recorded, thanks to Fleisher and the resourcefulness of dedicated musicians. Let's imagine being at a party in Brüll's house, with Brahms and all his other friends, enjoying each others' company and music.

Hosted by [Kile Smith](#), former Curator of the Fleisher Collection, and [Jack Moore](#), Program Director of [WRTI](#). In *Discoveries from the Fleisher Collection* we uncover the unknown, rediscover the little-known, and take a fresh look at some of the remarkable treasures housed in the Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music, at the Parkway Central Library of the [Free Library of Philadelphia](#). The Fleisher Collection is the largest lending library of orchestral performance material in the world. For recording details, please go to our [web page](#). For a detailed list of all our shows, please visit our [archives](#). (215) 686-5313, fleisher@freelibrary.org.